

CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT INVESTIGATIONS AND FAMILY ASSESSMENTS

It is well recognized that child abuse and neglect can produce long term destructive effects upon a child. Intervention, at times, becomes imperative to prevent further abuse and/or neglect and to promote functional behavior by individuals and families. All hotline reporting is made to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline Unit (CANHU), which receives child abuse and neglect reports 24 hours a day, seven days a week and transmits the report by telephone, or computer terminal, to the appropriate county CD office. All reports made on the toll-free hotline are recorded. The recordings provide an important training and evaluation tool. The following table represents the data for calls received by CANHU.

Fiscal Year	# of calls	# of CA/N Reports	# of Unable To Investigate	# Referrals
2000	104,541	50,922	24,141	25,473
2001	108,668	57,719	19,180	28,406
2002	107,286	54,969	18,330	29,664
2003	108,685	56,331	18,698	29,357
2004	109,655	58,194	17,936	32,254

Calls Received By CANHU

Please note: The total number of calls do not include those made to the Parental Stress Hotline. Also, non Child Abuse and Neglect referrals and Administrative referrals were added to this listing in 2001 and 2002 respectively.

There is a group of professionals identified as *mandated reporters* of child abuse and neglect established in Missouri law. *Mandated reporter* occupations are identified in Chapter 210.115 RSMo). *Mandated reporters* accounted for 55.9 % of the CA/N reports in CY 2004.

All other reporters are considered *permissive reporters*. Permissive reporters may report when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or who observe a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect. *Permissive reporters* accounted for 29.2 % of all CA/N reports in CY 2004. These figures for permissive reporters do not include anonymous reporter figures.

By law, an investigation of each report must be initiated within 24 hours of the receipt of the report, unless the sole allegation of the report is educational neglect which would be initiated within 72 hours. All investigations and family assessments are to be completed within 30 days unless documentation is provided for a delayed conclusion. When appropriate, CD offers services on a multi-disciplinary basis in cooperation with the juvenile court and other public and private agencies.

In 2001 Missouri began collaboration with Children's Research Center (CRC) integrating the Structured Decision Making (SDM) process into all phases of the Missouri's Child Welfare system.

The Children's Division Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2004 may be found at <http://www.dss.mo.gov/re/pdf/cs/csfy04.pdf>.

During CY 2000, 37.4% of CA/N reports were screened investigations compared to 2004, in which 45.1% of CA/N reports were screened as investigations. At the end of each investigation, the Children's Services Worker reaches a conclusion. The following are operational definitions for investigative conclusions:

Effective August 28, 2004, the standard of proof for making an investigative finding that child abuse or neglect exists will be "*Preponderance of Evidence*". Findings of CA/N reports received prior to August 28, 2004, used "Probable Cause" as the standard of proof.

- *Preponderance of Evidence*: A finding of preponderance of evidence identifies that degree of evidence that is of greater weight or more convincing than the evidence which is offered in opposition to it or evidence which as a whole shows the fact to be proved to be more probable than not.
- *Probable Cause*: A finding that abuse or neglect has occurred, or is occurring, as a result of visible signs, physical and/or credible verbal evidence provided to the investigator by the child, perpetrator, or witness in accordance with the definitions of abuse or neglect. This also includes cases, which are adjudicated by the courts. In CY 2000, (13.5%) of reported CA/N reports resulted in Probable Cause determinations. In CY 2004, 11.6% of CA/N reports resulted in Probable Cause or Preponderance of Evidence determinations.
- *Unsubstantiated-Preventive Services Indicated (PSI)*: A finding that insufficient visible signs, physical and/or credible evidence exist, but where the investigator determines that indicators are present which, if unresolved, could potentially contribute to abuse/neglect. Preventive and remedial services are offered to families in these circumstances. Use of the PSI investigative conclusion has assisted in preventing families from being incorrectly labeled as abusive or neglectful. In CY 2000, 3.2% of reported CA/N reports resulted in this compared to 4.6% in CY 2004.
- *Unsubstantiated*: A finding that insufficient physical or credible verbal evidence exists and where few or no indicators are identified and the worker has not identified a specific threat exists for the child. In CY 2000, 16.1% of CA/N reports were unsubstantiated compared to 21.2% in CY 2004.

The above definitions are not applicable on some cases. Other investigative conclusions include Unable to Locate; Inappropriate Report; Located out of State;

and Home Schooling. These determinations constituted approximately 7.6% of CA/N reports in CY 2004.

The following table illustrates the number of reported incidents of abuse and neglect by conclusion during calendar years 2000 through 2004.

Reported Incidents by Conclusion 2000 – 2004											
Year	Probable Cause (Preponderance of Evidence*)		Unsubstantiated PSI		Unsubstantiated		Family Assessment		Other		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	#	%	
2000	6,986	13.7%	1,671	3.4%	8,391	16.5%	31,187	61.2%	2,687	5.3%	50,922
2001	7,902	13.7%	2,318	4.0%	10,574	18.3%	34,022	58.9%	2,903	5.0%	57,719
2002	6,880	12.5%	1,985	3.6%	9,427	17.1%	33,181	60.4%	3,496	6.4%	54,969
2003	6,539	11.5%	1,683	3%	8,474	14.9%	34,953	61.4%	3,423	5.8%	56,961
*2004	6,527	11.6%	2,566	4.6%	11,929	21.2%	30,864	54.9%	4,283	7.6%	56,169

In CY 2000, there were 50,922 CA/N reports made involving 79,693 children and in CY 2004, CA/N reports made has risen to 56,169 CA/N reports, involving 85,133 children. In CY 2000, CA/N reports with substantiated findings, victims were neglected in forty-three percent (42.6%) of the cases and in CY 2004, forty-seven percent (47%) of reports with substantiated findings. Physical abuse was determined in twenty-five percent (25.3%) in CY 2000, and in CY 2004, also twenty-five percent (25.1%) of reports with substantiated findings. Sexual maltreatment was determined in twenty-five percent (25.1%) of reports in CY 2000, and just under twenty-three percent (22.6%) in CY 2004. In CY 2000, medical neglect was found in over two percent (2.7%) of probable cause determinations, in CY 2004, was found in over three percent (3.1%) and for educational neglect in CY 2000, fewer than three percent (2.9%) and in CY 2004, over two percent (2.2%). It should be noted that a child may be included in more than one category of abuse/neglect.

In CY 2000 and 2004, over sixty-one percent (61%) of children in substantiated CA/N reports were abused and/or neglected by one or both parents (biological/adoptive). Other relatives, such as stepparent, grandparent, or sibling, were responsible in CY 2000, for fifteen percent (25%) of these cases and in CY 2004, under twenty percent (19.8%). In CY 2000, in over four percent (4.2%) of these cases the perpetrators were of an unknown relationship to the child and in CY 2004, it has raised slightly under five percent (4.4%) of perpetrators were unknown to the victim.